(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have taken note of resistance and opposition from fishermen and environmental experts in implementing the project; and

(d) if so, in what manner the problems have been addressed?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT ANDHIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The commencement of work of Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project was inaugurated on 2nd July, 2005. The project is estimated to cost Rs. 2427.40 crores and is scheduled to be completed in about three and half years time.

(c) and (d) The concerns expressed by fishermen and environmentalists *inter-alia* include likely damage to marine ecology, marine flora and fauna, coral reefs, adverse effects on fish breeding and fish catching. While formulating the project, adequate care has been taken to ensure that adverse impact on environment is minimal. Two rounds of public hearing were also conducted as a part of the process for obtaining environmental clearance for this project where concerns raised by fishermen representatives and Non-Governmental Organisations were noted. These concerns along with the response of project authorities were considered by the Ministry of Environment & Forests while granting environmental clearance to the project. The conditions attached with the environmental clearance *inter-alia* enjoin upon project authority to monitor marine environment quality periodically and take all necessary measures to protect the bio-diversity including endangered species of mangroves, corals, mammals. For the benefit of local fishermen, development of fishing harbours has also been planned as a part of the project.

Road maintenance in Madhya Pradesh

†473. SHRI RK. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of SHIPPING ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that National Highways passing through Nine districts in Madhya Pradesh are in bad shape due to recent flood in Madhya Pradesh;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the action Government are taking to improve the condition of roads in Madhya Pradesh;

(c) whether there is any plan to provide Central aid in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA): (a) Only limited lengths of National Highways have been damaged by floods.

(b) Immediate restoration measures have already been completed.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Funds are provided based on the total availability of funds or the entire country extent of damages and /nfer-se-priority.

Cess on Diesel

474. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have created a National Road Fund of approximately Rs. 6000 crore per annum by levying a cess or Rs. 1 per liter on diesel;

(b) if so, the amount so far accumalated in this fund; and

(c) the manner in which the amount out of this fund so far allocated to various States for development of roads, with particular reference to Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA): (a) and (b) The Government has revamped Central Road Fund by levying a cess at the rate of Re. 1.00 per liter on petrol and diesel. The rate of cess was increased by 50 paise since 2003-04 and further increased by additional 50 paise since 2005-06. The total amount since 2000-01 made available from this fund is Rs. 38410.76 crore.

(c) The funds earmarked for the development of State roads including those of Maharashtra are distributed to the State based on 60 per cent fuel consumption in the State and 40 per cent georaphical area of the State.